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MacDonald, Clyde, Jr. oral history interview

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Interview with Clyde MacDonald Jr. by Andrea L'Hommedieu

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

MacDonald, Clyde, Jr.

Interviewer

L' Hommedieu, Andrea

Date

May 12, 1999

Place

Lewiston, Maine

ID Number

MOH 090

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Biographical Note

Clyde MacDonald Jr. was born in 1929 in Old Orchard Beach to Nellie MacDonald and Clyde MacDonald Sr., who were both of Canadian descent. The oldest of four children, MacDonald enlisted in the Army and served during the Korean War in Germany. After he left the military, he became interested in politics at the local level. He attended Portland Junior College for two years and then Bates for two years. He later earned a doctorate at the University of Maine while teaching undergraduate classes there. Meanwhile, he was becoming active in local Democratic politics. As he became more involved with politics, MacDonald found himself in more regular contact with Senator Muskie. Despite occasional policy disagreements, notably about the Vietnam War, which MacDonald opposed, MacDonald eventually went to work with Muskie, becoming an aide and close personal adviser.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: family history and social and political views; early political awareness and activism; other political influences; education; ethnic composition of Old Orchard Beach; first jobs; marriage; early involvement with Senator Muskie; McCulsky Commission; involvement with George Mitchell's gubernatorial campaign; first job interview with Muskie; issues in Aroostook County; Muskie and Mitchell; Dickey Lincoln power project; Maine-Canada

labor issues; Aroostook politics; Floyd Harding; Muskie's '76 campaign; Muskie ice fishing; *Bangor Daily News*; Republican competition in '76; Republicans who supported Muskie; Muskie and Cohen upstaging each other; Muskie's following in Northern Maine; and changes in news formats.

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Transcript

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview conducted by Andrea L'Hommedieu on May 12th, 1999 at the Muskie Archives at Bates College with Clyde MacDonald. Mr. MacDonald, could you start by giving me your full name and spelling it?

Clyde MacDonald: Yes, it's Clyde MacDonald, M-A-C, capital D-O-N-A-L-D.

AL: And where and when were you born?

CM: I was born in Old Orchard Beach in 1929.

AL: Did you grow up there?

CM: I grew up there, yeah.

AL: What are the names of your parents?

CM: They're both dead now. My, I was a Clyde, Jr., and my mother's name was Nellie, they were both from Canada originally. My grandfolks came from Scotland to Nova Scotia and then they migrated to Massachusetts with my folks and then they came to Old Orchard Beach. They bought an old inn that had been built in 1730.

AL: And how many children are there in your family?

CM: There were four. I have three brothers and a sister. They're all living.

AL: Where do you fit in, are you the younger or old---?

CM: I'm the oldest.

AL: The oldest?

CM: Yeah.

AL: And what were your parents' occupations?

CM: My father was a kind of a jack of all trades; he was a terrific worker. He had a terrific work ethic. But he did a lot of things fairly well, I guess nothing in particular excellently. And, but one of the interesting episodes in my life was that he, during the Depression, my, (just barely memories of this), [when] I was about five, six, seven, eight years old, he became the elected road commissioner in Old Orchard Beach, which was, would be like the public works director. And in the summer there's quite a bit to do there. And I can still see these hordes of men, maybe fifty, sixty, a hundred of them, like we dri-. . . . We lived about a mile and a half out of town. We'd drive down, he'd park near the town hall somewhere, and these men would come descending on us; they all wanted a job for the day.

And then when I wasn't with my father, I was wandering around, maybe going to the post office on errands for my grandmother who had an inn that was right there. People would give me nickels and pat me on the head, you know, and get an-. . . . I thought I had a terrific personality, you know, because all these people were paying so much attention to me. Of course actually it was my father, you know, who had control of all these jobs. And it was an elected position. I don't know how he ever survived, I mean, he was, had no political skills at all that I can see, and it's just a marvel to me that he ever got elected to anything, but he did. He got reelected several years. And then when the war came, he left that and went to work in the shipyard. He was too old for the war I guess, so, you know, he wasn't draft age, but. . . . And so during the war that's what he did, he worked at, in South Portland in the ship yard (*unintelligible word*).

AL: What were your family's political and social attitudes?

CM: My mother was a. . . . Neither of my parents went beyond the sixth grade and, but my mother was a very humanistic, practical-type person; had tremendous instincts. My father on the other hand was the, sort of a right-wing meanie I guess you'd call him. And my father lived and died by the Reader's Digest which in those days was a horrible publication. It was a really manipulative, conservative organ, and he got all his information about the world from that just about. Although they were newspaper readers, both of them, and my mother used to write real nice letters. And she, I've seen several of them that she wrote to her mother and others, you know, and when I was in the service that she wrote to me. And she was just a remarkable person, had a native intelligence and kindness, she was always helping people, you know.

They got divorced while I was in the service and I kind of held that against my father, (I really didn't like my father very well). And so, but my, in fact I was living with my mother and she just died two years ago. So that's what their political. . . . I remember my father being, in 19-, in the mid-thirties being an admirer of Franklin Roosevelt because of the social security thing I think partly, and those programs. But he seemed to have forgotten all that a little later like so many other people did, and I think he supported George Wallace's candidacy and so on. I think he, I think he was hostile to minority groups and things like that. Although he never, I'll give him credit, he never tried to push us along any particular lines and I never heard him say

anything that way. It was more his, I think people's political views reveal more about themselves than soul-searching.

AL: And how did you come to be politically aware or interested?

CM: Well, I was, you know, we were all, quite a poor family actually. And none of our folk, anyone in our family had ever been to college for example, and had no intention either. And I went in to the service and, during the Korean War but I, we were lucky; we were supposed to have been sent to Korea but we got sent to Germany instead. So I had it pretty easy compared with some. And when I came home. . . ., I did a lot of reading while I was in the service. We had an overseas library there that, the McCarthy investigation, the way Cohen and others came over and investigated for all those companies was- literature, and kind of became socially aware.

I got back to the States. From what I'd read there and I was an avid newspaper reader, and I came to the conclusion that the banks were the key controlling factor in the Republican party and that they were keeping, wouldn't let industries in that would boost wages and create employment, create opportunities for anybody that was outside the, outside the in groups so to speak. And so I became sort of a, (I voted for Eisenhower though, that was my first election I voted in for president), but then kind of drifted toward the Democrats on the notion that they represented outsiders that were trying to break in, and opportunity for ordinary people. And I was also very keenly aware of Franklin Roosevelt, 'cause I used to listen to his speeches on the radio and so on. So I had those orientations going, but I didn't become active in anything until 1962 I think it was. And there was a congressman running for reelection, Bill Hathaway. And I was living in, just outside of Bangor then teaching school there. We moved there intending to. . . . Because I wanted to be near the University of Maine and take some graduate courses. And, so we thought we'd, you know, so I taught school for two years as a way to make a living while we had that future in store, and my wife worked.

So I was quite enthused then; the incum-, he was running against, a re-, an incum-, he was running, he couldn't have been in the first reelection because he was running against an incumbent office holder that we used to call Big Potato. I'm trying to think of his name, and, from (*unintelligible word*), Maine. Anyway, I got excited about his candidacy and went out and tried to find out if there was any, (I lived in an enormously Republican town), and I wondered if there was any other Democrats, (see, I enrolled in the Democratic Party), and found two. And then we went door to door and raised money for this campaign and in fact we raised four hundred and fifty dollars in two days.

He, that was the first time I saw Muskie. They had a big rally in Brewer that night where they were featuring him, the Congressman, because I think Muskie wasn't up for reelection that year. And God, I heard Muskie give this marvelous speech; I was just spellbound, you know, by it. But, so that's, and then, so I never intended to get seriously into politics, but two years later this fellow who was running, he got elected and then two years later he ran again. And I supported him, and also thought that Lyndon Johnson would not get us into Vietnam and went around knocking on doors and trying to get people to support President Johnson's election because I feared that Goldwater would get us into a war in Vietnam. Then when Johnson betrayed everybody, I, you know, like a lot of others became very angry and went into the anti-war wing of the party and became very active as an anti-war Democrat. And so that's how I came to

politics really. At the time I was, I was working on my doctorate at the University of Maine and also was teaching there and was an instructor. And then I took on these anti-war activities in addition to that, so. It's a long answer.

AL: What were some of the other influences on you when you were growing up, besides your family?

CM: I could say there were very few. Reading mostly, when I was in the service, in this overseas library. Oh, and I also roomed with some interesting guys. We had one, I had become an atheist by that time and one of the people in the room next door, when we were in the barracks in Germany, was, he'd been, or had one year at Fordham, was going to be a priest. And then the fellow that was bunking with me never went to college, and I met with him about five years ago out in New York state. But he was one of the most brilliant individuals I've ever met in my life. He had a terrific mind and he was an ardent evolutionist and he knew just about everything there was to know about Darwin and Darwinianism and animal genetic stuff, you know, and I kind of became a convert to his points of view. And then I got some books at the library, historical works mostly, dealing with medieval and pre-modern European history and I got very much interested in that. So I think the combination of those influences were what did it. Also, I like to think that my mother had the influence in kind of pushing us toward being an advocate for the underdog and humane purposes.

AL: So your mother had a great influence on you?

CM: I think so.

AL: What years did you go to Bates?

CM: I only went to Bates from '56 to '58. I was one of the first. . . . I had gone to what is the University of Maine in Portland now, used, what at that time was kind of a nondescript, I guess, a non-prestigious let's say, two-year college called Portland Junior College. And then when I came out of the service, my best friend had just graduated from the University of New Hampshire and I was astounded that my friend got a college degree. I mean, we were in high school together and neither one of us, you know, took anything very seriously. And he said, "Gee," and so I, when I came back from the service I used to get into these conversations, you know, about history and things, you know and philosophy. And he kept saying, "You've got to go to college, you have to go to college."

So anyway, he finally convinced me to go in and fill out an application, see if I could get into Bates. I was eligible for the G.I. Bill because I was a Korean War veteran, otherwise I couldn't have considered it. And gosh, I got accepted and became one of their students, and I was the first student that. . . . There were three people in our class; one of the them was the first transfer student that Bowdoin had ever accepted from there, from the junior college, and I was the first one that Bates had ever accepted. And I kind of came in to Bates, didn't like it here at all. They had a president named [Charles Phillips], was it (*name*)? No, I'm trying to think, I'll think of his name, he was an economist. And they ran the institution like a little kids' school in my opinion. Here I was a veteran and, you know, I was twenty-two I guess when I, no older, twenty-four,

twenty-four. And you know these church services used to drive me up the wall because I was still atheistic and they put pressure on you to do that. And they had the Batesie smiles; you know, I just couldn't get into it.

And then I did okay; I majored in history and did an honors, was invited to write an honors thesis in history, which the history professors liked but it didn't get any recognition from the college because I was a transfer student. And so, there was always that, you know, but, so I didn't have a happy experience at Bates. I was glad to get out and when I went to the University of Maine graduate school on the doctoral program, I just thought, in my opinion, the university offered a much better education than they did here, with the exception of, you know, we had some good professors here. I mean, I'm not saying we didn't, that Bates didn't. But the administration was awful and the whole atmosphere, you know, was fif-, toward fifteen-year-old kids I felt rather than for people like me. And I thought it was a mistake that I ever went here, but. . . .

AL: Were there any professors at the University of Maine who really touched you?

CM: Yes. There was one, the most brilliant man I've ever met, named Bob Thompson. He had an international reputation which sounds a lot, which is something that can be easily misunderstood because the, there are very few people I think, very few scholars in the realm of political philosophy that have contributed much to the world of learning. But among those small circles of the top people and some top political economists, he, you know, he had recognition like in New York and London and so on. And he was one of a kind. He never got his doctorate which kind of hurt him, his, career wise. But he didn't care, you know, he had this, he was, whatever he turned to, I mean, he was just such an original thinker. And his analysis, his analytical abilities were just un-. . . . So he was the dean of, I'd say, all the intellectual forces at the University of Maine and he was recognized as such by the other faculty. And when we, I felt quite honored because myself. . . . This fellow that I told you that I grew up with in Old Orchard, had invited me to his college, he'd gone to the University of New Hampshire, he ended up teaching at the University. He went to the university and got his advanced degree and ended up teaching there. In fact has written several books now; is quite a noted scholar of Maine labor history, and so. . . .

AL: What's his name?

CM: Charles Fontress. And so anyway, Ronald Banks who is also, has written a Maine history and advised the Muskie people, (like a kind of, there was a link there on the Indian land claims question); he was murdered in New Orleans unfortunately. But anyway the three of us used to go to this fellow's house every, what was it, every two weeks? He lived in Old Town, and we'd just sit there and have sessions about, you know, this or that, and they were just so rewarding. The fellow was an outstanding chess player. He was probably, knew more about pro football than, well, certainly more than, I'm a pro football nut and, you know, I, his knowledge of the game was just unbelievable. And he was a great Giants fan and I used to argue with him about that. but his real contribution was in the realm of political thought and he never published anything. He did come up with a manuscript of a book that I was privileged to get a draft of. I still have it at home. It's never been published, and I keep thinking that I'd like to; I know his wife real well because we used to be at the house, and would like to see that something is done

with that. I don't know as I'm up to it myself, but I think, and I don't think it's a book, but I think it would make a terrific article. His key theme is the, is making, is distinguishing among things that other people get confused like power and authority and things like that, you know. His insights are just unbelievable. So I hope somebody there, someday at the University will, or some scholars from somewhere will go to the University and look at his notes on things because there's just a wealth of original material in there.

AL: Could you talk a little bit about the community that you grew up in? It was Old Orchard?

CM: Yes. We had a very large French population in town. My mother used to work at the inn for my grandmother in the summers and so she in turn hired a French lady most of the time, most summers, to oversee us. I remember her name was Susie DeGrace and she had a terrific accent, could hardly, I mean, a lot of words she could not pronounce. We became very fond of her and recognized very early that there was an anti-, you know, a strong anti-French. . . . One of our neighbors that I used to visit all the time, you know, he was always knocking, he was a English-Irish descendant, and you know, he had no use for the French. And so I just thought this was, you know, just instinctively I guess or whatever, my experience, was terrible, you know. Because I knew so many, and a lot of school-mates, you know, were French and so on.

And so other than, and then of course the whole east side of Old Orchard Beach, all the hotels, were owned by Jewish people. And New York Jewish people came to Old Orchard during the summer for their vacations. And one of the early jobs that I had was. . . . You were supposed to have been sixteen to work for Western Union. And of course this was the days before all this modern equipment, so they, if someone wanted to get a message to somebody in written form, the only way they could do it would be through Western Union. So I was, oh, let me just back up and say that because of the war and be-, there was a great shortage of people to do things, you know. And so even though, and so I had tremendous opportunities at a number of jobs growing up. . . . I mean, or even before that when I was a kid, I always had magazines to deliver and then my aunt was a reporter for what, for a little newspaper, weekly, called *The Old Orchard Beach Times* so I used to deliver those. And then I'd, it seemed to me I was always knocking on doors delivering things, selling subscriptions or whatever. And people were very, even though it was the Depression, I mean, people, looking back on it I knew they couldn't, some of them couldn't afford these things but they did it, you know.

And so I had that kind of a charming growing-up period where the whole darn world seemed like very friendly to me. And anyway, so I was, I had a job running. . . . There was a Kiddie Land in Old Orchard; they had a ferris wheel and a train that went around the tracks and an electric see-saw and whatever. I remember you could get, we could buy six tickets for a quarter so a kid could go on all six rides for a quarter, or they were I guess a dime apiece, something like that. And I was getting ten cents an hour and was working long hours and I used to eat lunch at my grandmother's inn on the way; lived on the top of the hill only a few hundred yards from the beach. And I went by one day and I saw this sign at the Western Union Office, you know, "Delivery boy wanted," or delivery, not boy but whatever they. I said, "God wouldn't that be," got excited, I'd heard that they paid well. And so I walked by there probably for three or four days and that sign, seeing that sign, seeing that sign, finally one day I walked by and I got the nerve to go in, oh, because it said "age sixteen." I went in and this woman looked at me and she says, "How old are you?" And I said, "sixteen." And she said, "oh," so she asked me a little bit

about myself; she says “Well, we need somebody desperately,” she said, “if you want to start, you know, we’ll give you a try but you’ve got to start right now.” Well I had the keys and everything to this Kiddie Land down the street, you know. I was on my lunch hour, and I went right to work for Western Union, never informed the employer or anything, you know, so that outfit was closed all afternoon. Of course my father found out, oh, he was wild and I couldn’t figure out what was wrong because I’d taken advantage of this new opportunity. I went from ten cents an hour to thirty-five cents an hour, plus tips, you know. And so anyway, I worked there for two summers.

And everything in Old Orchard was seasonal, as I say. I had no attractive future prospects or anything, but my goal in life, in fact my dream was to get a job clerking in the hardware store on Main Street; that was the world’s best job. And this friend, this kid that I grew up next to was very handy with (*unintelligible word*) tools and could do things which I can’t. He got the job, I remember that, for at least two or three years and I, oh, he was, I just envied that. So it was that kind of a, it was that kind of a town. I drove taxis during the summer for two years to three years from six o’clock at night until six in the morning, and again I was only seventeen and eighteen. I was still in high school the first year I did that. And, but no one paid any attention to it. I think one of the reasons why kids have problems today is that all these laws that are designed to protect them are taking activities away from them that they could do. And then with all these other diversions and the possibilities going, you know, it isn’t that surprising to me, I think, you know, we’d be much better off to get rid of some of the child labor protective laws and, so that, you know, kids could have an opportunity to do these things. At least keeps you out of trouble.

AL: What was the political make up of Old Orchard Beach?

CM: I have no idea. All I know is my father ran for road commissioner and a lot of people hated him and a lot of people loved him. And I remember we had, he had meetings up in the garage and my mother would be making sandwiches and there’d be seventy-five to a hundred men out there and he’d, they’d be discussing something. I was too young to know what was going on, but, I really don’t know what the political make-up of the town was. Oh, I was, I started to say that I, this Western Union job brought me in touch with the hotels and I became much more aware of the Jewish population, you know, as a result of that. Plus we had two or three Jewish kids that we went to school with. And right after I graduated, (I was driving a taxi), I became kind of an admirer of a Jewish fellow that owned one of the larger hotels named Jordan Goodkowski. And he, no, not Jordan Goodkowski that was a columnist, jeez now I forget names, his last name was Goodkowski, his first name wasn’t Jordan, and he took a liking to me, you know, and I used to have great conversations with him and kind of sensed that Jewish, the Jewish people that (*unintelligible phrase*) were more interested in public events and public affairs than the people that I grew up with. You know, like my, and this stuck with me ever since, I mean, I think that’s still, that’s true today. I know we’re not supposed to generalize about minorities, but I think there are some valid generalizations. In fact I think that’s the key to knowledge is establishing valid generalizations.

AL: When and where did you meet your wife?

CM: Well, when I came home from the service, (as I say I’d been in Germany two years,) this

friend of mine I was talking about that was (*unintelligible word*), he was going with a woman that was living in Portland with these two other girls. And he wrote me a letter I think, in the service. He says, "Gee, you've got to meet, when you come home I've got to introduce you to this friend of my girlfriend." And, so then when I got home, and he, for two or three weeks there he said, "You know, you you've got to come in with me one night." You know, he was going in like every Saturday or something to visit. So finally I agreed to and these two women, and with a third person, all three of them were from Berlin, New Hampshire and they had come down to Portland. My wife was going to Northeastern Business School and the other one was going somewhere else. They were all very poor; no clothes to speak of or anything, and no spending money and were trying to get an education to better themselves.

And so I met her there and never intended to get married. I, the, eventually a couple of years later the other two got married and it created a situation. My wife was going to have to go back home and all of a sudden I realized that I, hey, you know, I said, "Jeez, I can't live without her," you know? And so that's, I came to marriage through the back door so, we were twenty-eight when we got married in 1956. And that was the year that I graduated from the junior, had just complete-. . . . The other thing was that I was in Portland every day, you know, going to the junior college and she worked for an insurance company. Sometimes I'd meet her for lunch or after school, you know. I mean so it was easy, so we had, and it's only twelve miles from Old Orchard anyway, thirteen miles.

AL: Has she been politically involved as well?

CM: Very much so as a result of, you know. . . . I think, when I married her like most people who grew up in small-town America you're non-political, you know what I mean? But she became part of my world, you know, the intellectual world and she's a, today she's a more avid reader than I am. She only reads nonfiction which I do, too. And I'm like, she's out there in the car now reading a biography of Hitler as a matter of fact. And she contributes to just about any liberal cause that will ask her. And always votes and we support candidates, you know, and always have and things like that.

AL: Could you go ahead and tell me when you became involved with Senator Muskie and in what capacity, give me kind of a chronology of your association
CM: All right, my first contact with Senator Muskie was, I told you, was at that rally in Brewer, but that didn't have any carry-over effect. I just had this lingering very impressed notion of him. But I told you I became a leader of the anti-war movement and I was pretty disgusted with Muskie all through the sixties for not taking a stance against the war. And the next time I met him was at the Democratic convention in, (was it Waterville or Augusta?), in 1968 and Hubert Humphrey had been invited as a guest speaker. And I was with the protest group and we were laying for Muskie when, there were five of us I think that were probably the leaders of the anti-war movement. And we wanted Muskie to support a measure that we had gotten into the platform thing, oh we were going to introduce on the floor. That would have been embarrassing to the administration. And he wouldn't do it. Hathaway did, this congressman, but I didn't realize at the time, I think he was doing it for his own reasons to try and get out from under the Muskie cloud. Muskie was the number one and he was down there. And so I think he was catering to those groups. But actually his stance on the war proved, I found out later, to be worse than Muskie's.

But so, of course I didn't know at the time that he was being tabbed for Vice President either; if we had any inkling of that that might have made a difference. I walked out of that convention as a matter of fact. I tried to lead a walk out movement and only two other people went with me and the only reason they went was because they wanted a ride home, back to Bangor. It was a big failure, but I was really angry, and didn't really want much to do with Muskie. And so I got on, and I got myself elected to the state committee as an anti-war person. And you, kind of gets you involved, you know, and then the Muskie thing keeps coming up and eventually you make friends and I kept, Ed Muskie's name would come up and I might say something not too, well not necessarily derogatory but certainly not complimentary. And they'd always contradict me with, you know, they knew who had done this and that and so it impressed me that this was a very kind of honorable guy, you know what I mean? But, again it didn't mean much.

And then, so I had this, one of the great things that happened to me was that unlike so many quasi-university professors across the country in the anti-war movement, I had great sympathy not only for the soldiers in the field who were, I felt were victims and never was hostile to them, but also with the conservative wing of the party that supported the administration. I know, I had a personal, established personal relationships with these where they would support me politically even though they wouldn't do it anyone else. So as a result, by, you know, 1972 or so I had a very, (this sounds self serving but again, I'm just taking short cuts here), a very formidable political machine throughout the second district mostly, made up of all elements of the party. And there was still some strong traditionalists that didn't like me or want anything to do with me but they were a small minority.

And so when, (going back to this other thing), the reasons I walked out of the Democratic convention, I thought the whole thing was unfair. We, and I thought the national convention was very unfair, so I used whatever ties I had established on the state committee to get myself appointed to the Mikulski Commission. The Mikulski Commission was created by the National Democratic Party to revise the party rules. They did so in order to appease organized labor. Organized labor felt there were too many liberal radical types on the, on the, that had established the rules and so they wanted to get more of their people on the rules commission. So I contacted Vi Pease who was the state chairman at the time and Nancy Chandler was a National Committee woman I think. And anyway, they recommended me. It was a big surprise when I got down there because, you know, I was in the very wing of the party that they were creating these positions to try and overcome.

Oh yeah, where did that leave me? Oh, so, my solution, they were all, this was the time when I think McGovern was one of the least astute candidates we ever had. I mean he just caved in to every minority and every issue afraid of losing their support and what he ended up doing was losing the support of the American people. Because I still believe that Ronald Reagan had the right idea that most rank and file people vote, that vote, don't do so out of self-interest, but do it because they identify with the country and with a few big things that they think's good for the country, and I think that was Reagan's success. McGovern was just the opposite, you know, he just. . . . And so I didn't like what McGovern was doing; I knew he was going to lose when I saw what he did at the convention. And I saw it on TV; I wasn't at the convention.

So I wanted to get on the Mikulski Commission in order to help revise the party rules, to make them fairer for candidates and, for all candidates and not just the in-house people. And I saw a proportional representation as the key to it. I said, "You know, we don't need quotas for women, we don't need quotas for Blacks and so on; if we had proportional representation where each candidate, you know, stakes out their position and if they want to exclude women and lose the womens' vote then they're going to have a smaller proportion of votes. If they do the same thing with the Blacks and they do the. . . . S-, so I wrote a paper on it for Mikulski, she's now Senator Mikulski, she's in her third term I think, from Maryland. And she had her staff guy call me up to ask if I wanted to serve on the executive committee because she was impressed with this paper. And I couldn't do it because I was University and I took my University responsibilities very seriously. And I said, "Gee, how do other people, traveling all around the country, you know, with these, at these sessions?" I went to the one in Washington, I went to one in Boston, but I had to, you know, forego many of them because I just simply couldn't; I felt I had too many duties to my students.

So anyway, that was 1973, and while I'm at the state committee everybody's talking about George Mitchell. And I didn't know George Mitchell from a hole in the ground except that I considered him to be a Muskie honcho. And, but gee, I heard these glowing things and he was going to run for governor, and when I got on the Mikulski Commission I really got an earful. I mean, I had people from Texas, California, all around the country, some of whose names are familiar like Pat, Roy Patman's daughter from Texas and some nationally known people, all raving about Mitchell, you know, as to what an outstanding person he was. He would have been a national committeeman before that, or at that time, he was, at that time. And I'd never met him.

And he called me up one night and wanted to know if I would support him for governor; he was in the running for governor. And of course I, as I say, I had my own political, I won't say machine, but political organization and so I was very valuable to anyone in the Democratic Party that wanted to run for office because they could carry, you know, at least some of those people. And I thought a minute and I knew of the tremendous respect he had on the Mikulski Commission. So I said, "Well, you know I'm pushing proportional representation in the national party rules." And I said, "If you support me for, with the Mikulski Commission on proportional representation, I'll support you for governor." God, there was about a two-second delay, then he says, "I'll support proportional representation." And so, that was one of the great things in my life because, I mean, Mitchell was just a, ended up, as you know I ended up working for him. But anyway I was intending, we all thought Mitchell was a shoo in for the governorship in 1974

And at the University the kind of history I want to teach is the kind that this Bob Thompson was involved with. It has to do with grand themes and the interrelationships of interdisciplinary approaches and taking the grand sweep of the relation between thought and traditions and conventional social arrangements and so forth. And anyway, there was no room for that in the university. They were cutting back and the dean that was very favorable to this developed a disease and he went on sabbatical and so we lost our support. So I would either have to leave the University and seek teaching jobs elsewhere out of state or wherever, or we could take our chances and stay there. And my wife, bless her, she's never been financially motivated. I

thought this was a very, we, by that time we had so many friends from the annual, we were in the Democratic Party and all that; we kind of fit in to the community there, or a community. And we both decided that, “The hell with it,” you know, “let’s take our chances. Teaching isn’t worth that much. If we’ve got to move out of state and so on, just do that, you know, maybe I can get a job doing something else.”

And, well anyway, but as the Mitchell campaign progressed we were pretty confident he was going to win and I would go to Augusta with him as his, probably his chief of staff or whatever oh-. And when he lost, it was a crusher because we were left, you know, pretty high and dry and so we had to scramble around. Well, it was just about that time we heard that Muskie had decided that he was going to run; come back to Maine and reestablish his ties. The knock on Muskie was that he was more interested in national, international issues and he kind of lost touch with Maine, and so he had to reestablish that. And so he was the first elected official to establish field offices in Maine to do constituent and, you know, he used to call me his “eyes and ears” in northern and eastern Maine.

And so we opened an office in Portland and one in Bangor and hired Larry Benoit for Portland and myself for Bangor. And, let’s see, (what was my point on this? Oh yeah) and so I guess Mitchell had told him some good things about me and so forth. And so Charlie Micoleau, or Maynard Toll I guess was Muskie’s aide at that time, called and wanted to know if I’d be interested in such a thing. And, again, you know, I said “Jeez, I don’t know,” you know. I mean I knew, the things I’d heard about Muskie were quite favorable but I wasn’t, you know, I’d heard, I also had heard bad things about politics and how, you know, it’s a corrupting process and you can’t keep your integrity and all this, you know. And so I asked three or four people that knew Muskie well that I knew, you know, (*unintelligible phrase*). So, and actually the same thing had happened with Mitchell, too, you know, before I went to work for him, or at least supported him for governor. But that was different, that was a volunteer; you could get out any time.

And so Mitchell recommended me to Muskie and one thing led to another. I was one of the, I don’t know how many candidates they considered, but Charlie Micoleau had a very. . . . Charlie Micoleau is an outstanding guy and he developed this kind of a three- or four-question questionnaire that he wanted me to respond to. So I wrote an essay on how I viewed the scene in eastern Maine and what I felt a senator’s representative role should be and how he should operate and things like that. And it impressed Muskie quite a bit and so I got the job. I’ll tell you about that interview; it was, it was really something. . . .

AL: Hold on to that thought. I’m going to turn the tape over for us.

End of Side One, Tape One
Side Two, Tape One

AL: We are now on Side B of the interview with Clyde MacDonald on May 12th, 1999 at the Muskie Archives at Bates College. And you were just about to tell me a story.

CM: I was going to tell you about how I really met Muskie for a job interview. He came to Bangor in, I think it was a Jan-, it was early January; it was a cold, cold winter’s night. And

John Delahanty, Judge Delahanty's son was kind of his all, everything, because there were no offices in Maine, you know, I mean, so when he came to Maine John got so that he would meet him and take him around and whatever. In fact I think John probably interviewed me, too, is the first one that I did. And anyway, he said, "Well the senator's staying at the Clean City Motel out on the Auburn Road and he's got to be somewhere at," I think he said eight o'clock, and so I've set up an interview with you for, "It was either six-thirty or seven, I don't remember but. . . . So here I am, I'm saying, "Jesus, I sure hope Muskie doesn't remember me because the only time I met the guy was when I confronted him at the Democratic convention in 1968." Later I learned there was no danger; he had very, his memory for people was almost as bad as mine. And when we were together at events it was a circus because, I mean, because he didn't know anybody's name and neither did I. Mitchell was just the opposite, he could, if he met a four-year-old kid on the streets of Portland ten years before and saw him when the kid was fourteen up in the Canadian border, he'd recognize him, you know. I mean, he was am-, he had amazing. . . . And that's what you should have in, I kept saying we were in the wrong profession because, you know, shouldn't do that.

So anyway, John Delahanty knocks on the door, and here I am standing in the corridor, you know, waiting for this interview. And there was a pause, and there was a pause, and John knocked three or four times and finally the door opened and Muskie's standing there in a t-shirt and shorts, his eyes barely open so obviously we'd just awakened him. Scratches his head, and then scratches his stomach, says, "Goddamn staff," he says, "they never let you sleep." And that was the way I got interviewed (*unintelligible phrase*), "Senator, don't you remember this is (*unintelligible word*)," "Oh yeah, yeah, go sit down, he says, and he went in and he washed up, you know, took a cold wash or whatever and came out about ten minutes later. And I'm sitting there talking with John, and God, he looked like a new man, you know, he looked like he'd just gotten up in the morning. And so he said, so John says, you know, something about my background, and Muskie says, "Well, he sure can write, I'll tell you that." And so I knew he'd read the essay. And he says, he says, "Yeah, that was quite a paper you wrote." He said, "There was one line in there," he said, "that impressed me particularly," he says, "you know what that was?" And I said, "No," and actually I did. Because I'd seen, and I was offended by so many of these what I call smart-ass college professors in the anti-war movement and other times; they think they know everything. And I knew that that would, I just suspected that would be a source of concern to Muskie, not knowing me or anything like that. So I wrote a line in there that when, if a, if someone representing the senator did not know precisely what his position on an issue was, the representative should have enough self-confidence so that he could proclaim to the world that he didn't know. And that, and so Muskie says, "Well, the line was," and he repeated that line almost word for word. He says, "do you mean that?" I says, "Absolutely," I said, "you know, we're supposed to be representing, not misrepresenting." "Well, John." That was, just about, that was it, I mean I don't remember what he, he didn't say he'd hire me on the spot. But I think, they invited me, invited me to go to that event with them; I think it was a Tara___ Club in Bangor. No, that's not right. But I think I went with them that night, but I'm not sure of that.

And, anyway, that was my introduction to Muskie. And we were hired to help him reestablish his ties with Maine people, handle local problems as well as others, serve as his eyes and ears as he kept saying, and to show that Muskie did care about things in Maine and so on. And, you

know, eventually it worked. People forget that senators didn't used to have offices in Maine. Margaret Smith had a, an office but it wasn't staffed or anything and, you know, if people wanted to get, to contact her, they either wrote to Washington or they didn't get done. And I think we were the first.

AL: Now today I think we take it for granted that the offices are there.

CM: Yes, yeah, we do. It, the second district is quite a district of course, extending for. . . . It's the largest one, eastern congressional district, east of the Mississippi and that was basically my territory. And all the really big issues at that time were in Aroostook. God, I wore out two cars. I mean, we'd go, because the distances are so, going just from Bangor to Presque Isle is a hundred and forty miles or so one way, I mean, just on a bee line, I mean, as near as you can make it. And for example, the Loring Air Force Base was an issue there in 19-, I think it was 1978 President Carter was proposing to close it and so I was heavily involved with that. The Maine woodsmen were up in arms, as they are today, about the Canadian labor and there was violence in the woods and, over that. There, and so, the potato thing was a perennial thing from two angles. One you'd get drought or you'd get too much rain and it would destroy the crop and so there was such a thing as a federal potato diversion program where the government would buy up the bad potatoes and so farmers would get at least some money, but you had to do that on a case-by-case basis. So every time it come up you had to try and get something like that through the Senate and through the Congress, you know, and that and stuff. Dealing with that, and then there was the Canadian competition on potatoes as well, and so the potato thing of course in Aroostook would always be big, that occupied a lot of time and attention. And the Lor-, with Loring and then the woodcutters' issues and there was one other. Oh, the Dickey Lincoln Power Project which was one of Muskie's babies, favorite things.

So the reason, so I mention that because I had said that, I mention that because I spent more time alone with Muskie probably than any other staff person he had during those years, I mean, includes Washington staff or whatever. In fact, we had an outstanding newsman in Washington named Bob Rose and, I don't know why Mitchell didn't keep him on when he became senator because I think Bob was one of the top newsmen that we, that I'd ever worked with. And, but Bob couldn't, like other staff people, they couldn't get answers from Muskie, you know. They wanted to know what he's thinking about this or how he's likely to respond or what he thinks of this, and he was a tremendous procrastinator because he liked to take a lot of time to think things, I guess it was to think things out. And so they'd call me and they'd say, you know, "Jeez, I gotta know. . . ." so, you know, I did have this, so I would, when I felt it was appropriate you know I'd kind of introduce the subject to Muskie to feel him out to see if I could get a response that I could get back to these folks to give them an inkling as to the likely direction or whatever, you know.

But one of the things that I think. . . . I, I think I did have a special relationship with Muskie. And I think one of the reasons I did was because, (maybe as you get older you realize this), you sense that we're overwhelmed in a world of words and of course every time a senator stops or goes into a store or no matter what he's doing, you know. You get all these people that come up and want to, they might ask him a question or comment. And I thought "How precious silence must be to these people," and I think the same thing with Mitchell. So I would try and gauge

whether the senator really felt like talking or not and if he didn't, we could go for half, three-quarters of an hour, maybe even an hour and a half with, I wouldn't say a word. And Muskie would bring his briefcase with him and often times he'd, you know, pull it out, sitting on the front of the car and work on some things. And usually, I don't think he ever worked more than a total of more than twenty to twenty-five minutes. But whatever he did, he did his things you know, and put them away, and then he, if he volunteered a comment or a question, you know, that was a signal that he wanted to get into conversation. Then I could draw on these other things that they'd give me as well as do some things on my own, and we got some good conversations going. I did the same thing with Mitchell. And I think they appreciated this rest from being besieged with words, but they never said so, so that's my, my assessment.

AL: Can we go back just a little bit and tell me when you went to Aroostook county for these different issues, sometimes you would go with the senator and sometimes would you go by yourself and be his representative?

CM: Absolutely, yes.

AL: And, for instance, what were some examples of things that you did?

CM: That I did on my own?

AL: When you would go up there. Would you meet with people and give them the senator's view, or what was your goal?

CM: Yeah, because the senator would get invitations; he couldn't always go. Or something might go up that I felt needed, you know, the opposition to the Dickey Lincoln Project for example, when that surfaced alarm bells would go up and I'd zing up. And, or I remember when they had a public hearing on it. It was in, it was in the town, it was in Fort Kent I guess. And I had a guy, Jim Case, whom I hope you'll interview, he's in Brunswick, he's an attorney in Brunswick now, but he was our key staff person on the Dickey Lincoln Project. And Jim did a position paper for the Senate, around about fourteen or fifteen pages on the Dickey Lincoln Project. And, now, I say, "Jim Case did it," of course it was, you know, some dialogue with the senator and I don't know how much the senator told him, "take out this," or "change this," or whatever, but, you know, I mean the, but basically it was Jim's document. So I went up there and we had all this opposition, you know, about this public hearing that was put on by the Corps of Engineers. And like I had, the auditorium was filled with people and I told the engineer there that, you know, I was, wanted to read Muskie's statement. And he says, "How long is it," and I said, "Well, it's pretty long." And he says, "Well, maybe if you cut it short." And I said, "I don't think I can cut Muskie's stuff short." So anyway when I got, when it came my turn to present the case. . . . Because we were usually near the top of the pecking order, you know what I mean? So probably I was the second one that spoke or something. And I can remember that engineer after about, as I say I think it was fourteen pages, after about the eighth or ninth page interrupting me and saying, Could you summarize the rest of that," you know, that report is kind of long and, and I said, "No," I said, "I could not." I said, "Senator Muskie's done an analysis here that the press doesn't seem to be interested in or, and is the real basis for his support has not been getting full attention," and I said, "I'm going to read every word of it." "Oh, all right," you know. So anyway, I finished the statement. So I mean it was something like that.

Or, I'm trying to think of some of the, some of the things that I did on my own. I did a lot; I mean I was up there. . . . Muskie would come up, you know, when he could and every, oh probably once a month came up there, oh, and sometimes more when these issues surfaced, you have to go back, you know. But I was up there almost every other weekend, so much so that the (*unintelligible phrase*) decided to send someone up in my stead. Well he didn't realize that if you're going to represent the senator, you've got to be the one you know, or you lose stature; these other congressmen and so forth didn't do that. And so I think that when I went to Aroostook, the public up there had a real sense that I was close to Muskie and I spoke for Muskie. Whereas these other staffers were looked upon I think as messengers, meaning, you know, and just. . . . And so (*unintelligible phrase*) he just didn't understand. He said, "I thought I was doing you a favor."

I went up one time and represented the senator with the Maine woodsmen. See what you would do is, one of the things you would do, you'd go up and talk with people and try to do a factual report so you could write a position, write a memo to the senator to really give him the guts of what was going on. And I did this with the Canadian, the American-Canadian labor issue. And I became convinced that there's no way that the Maine woodsmen could possibly make a living at the wages they were paying. One of the advantages the Canadians had I discovered was that they could cut wood nine months out of the year, then go back home and collect high unemployment benefits for the other three months, and then they'd be all ready in the spring to come back. Well our unemployment benefits weren't that good, you know what I mean, and if there was other work you had to take it and so on. But this became a kind of a tradition for them, and so they could make a good living because their families were taken care of in the winter by the government, and, you know. And I don't resent that; I think our government should be doing the same thing. I think their government's better than ours as a matter of fact, for most purposes. But, health care and other things. . . .

But anyway, the, things came to a head and so the wood-, Maine Woodcutter's Association called a conference or something for the little town of St. Francis which is, you know where St. Francis is? Okay. In the town hall. And of course Muskie couldn't go so I went up, I didn't have any notes or anything prepared for, you know what I mean, from him, because I had done all the work on it and I had conveyed to Washington, you know, I thought I was waiting for instructions, never really got any and so went up. And I sat there all that morning and listened to the testimony of, Mr. Irving [who] was there in person. That is, he had three sons and one of them was the manager of his Woodlands division and I think one was the Gas and Oil, I don't know what the other one was. But, you know, they had these em-, little mini empires under the big empire.

AL: And you are referring to the Irvings of the Irving Oil Corporation?

CM: Yes, yeah. And so again I felt that, that, obviously felt, I mean you don't use your position to try and become a center of attention or think that you know, you know, got to comment on everything. So I sat there all morning, never said a word which is typical. And then the afternoon session started at one o'clock. About one-thirty I could see that they weren't getting anywhere. And one thing I always did do, no matter what kind of a meeting I went to, I always got up to make some comment because I wanted everybody to know that Senator Muskie cared

enough about the issue to have someone there, you know? And, but this, that wasn't in this case, this was substantive, because. . . . I stood up and introduced myself as Senator Muskie's representative and that he was totally versed on the issue and we'd looked at it very closely. And I said I look at the financial picture that these woodsmen have presented here and there's just no way. . . . Oh, the woodsmen had told me by the way, they tell you this, that if they could get fifty cents a thousand more on their, for their, the logs that they haul on their skids, that they would be, that they could make it, see. And so I stood, as I say, I stood up and I said, "There's just no way they can do it." He says, "Well," so Mr. Irving says, "Well, what do you think they want?" And I said, "I think if they've got their fifty cents a thousand more for their skidder logging operations. . . . " I still see him now, he's a great big guy: "Sure I'll give them fifty cents a thousand." The whole meeting broke up and everybody went home happy; I mean it was unbelievable. But I mean, you get, you know, that was a, sort of an incident.

And then there was a guy up there named Jim Varesy who was in cahoots with some of the, he ran the, oh God, there was a, they called it the Varesy empire; it was all based on federal grants and foundation grants. And they had these offices and where, he was Mr. Everything in Aroostook County. And Northern Maine Regional Planning Commission (*unintelligible word*). And Jim threw in his lot with some of the anti-Dickey Lincoln people. And I used to go up. . . . One of the things I did do, by the way, as an aside here, was I held office hours; publicized office hours maybe once every six weeks or so in the, in Fort Kent. . . . I'd announce, try and get it announced in the paper that I was going to be there at such and such a time and so on. And it brought me into close contact with the town managers and the town managers would tell me a lot of things confidentially about this, and some of the things were about Jim Varesy. They didn't say any-, dare say anything publicly because he had so much authority over the grants; he wrote most of the grants for the town, and federal programs that were filtered through his agency, see. And so they didn't dare say anything and I thought he was enormously popular and I found out that, you know, there was, that he wasn't. So those are the kinds of things you don't, as an intelligence gathering thing.

So anyway, I can't remember the incident but I thought Jim went over the line publicly and he castigated Muskie in this thing, and I demanded to meet with him; I happened to be in the county at the time. And I don't know what Jim thought he was doing but he called his whole staff together and this was around seven o'clock at night, after the workday had ended at six-thirty. And it was in the winter, and he had this, you know, great big marvelous palace that he'd built for himself there, his headquarters. There was about twenty staff people as I recall. And he says, "So, you want to discuss Dickey Lincoln," and he says, "what's your problem?" you know, or whatever. And I lit into him like I guess no one else ever had, and I told him that he was a, he was grandstanding on the project for his own personal things at the expense of Muskie and (*unintelligible phrase*). I walked out of there, I, oh I was going back there ten years later when I worked for Mitchell and people were still talking about, you know, this confrontation that we had. But I felt that, you know, this, I mean that, like Muskie did that you can't always. . . . I mean sometimes you've got to back people down; you've got to, you know, address these things.

But, and then I think finding out about the potato thing and, you know, what the latest thing the Canadians were doing, what, how the Americans perceived it, you know, and (*unintelligible word*) memos and memos and memos and getting them back to Washington. . . . If it was clear

the senator couldn't come up and you felt that something needed to be addressed and you'd go back up and do it as his representative. But I, Charlie Micoleau became the AA by then and he pretty much let me do what I want. I mean, if I decided I needed to go to Aroostook to do this I can't recall a single instance where he said, "Don't," you know what I mean, or something like that. So I had a ball because I was as near to self-directing as you can be in a position of that nature. And I think it just whetted the appetite maybe; adrenaline flow or whatever, you know. And I operated at a pretty high level there for, both for him and for Mitchell. I thought I did, I mean some, they don't know anything about it.

AL: Did you get to know some of the more popular political figures in Presque Isle, those times you came up, people like Floyd Harding?

CM: Did I get to know Floyd Harding? I guess the heck I did, yeah.

AL: Could you tell me a little bit about him; your impressions?

CM: Eventually I hired his daughter as a, one of our staff people for the Presque Isle office when I worked for Senator Mitchell; this was later. I don't want to say too much about that. The, Floyd was the Democratic political figure in the county. I always sensed that there was a little, (in fact I know there was,) a little bit of a gap there between Muskie and him. I think Floyd expected more than he got, you know what I mean? [A] more fulsome response or, "buy it down the line" kind of thing. Muskie was not that way, you know. And so there was that, but Floyd and I became very good friends. I used to visit him. Half the time I went up there there was another fellow named Carmichael that I became very, very good friends with and he was one of Floyd's best friends.

AL: What's his first name?

CM: Isn't that awful; one of my best friends, he's dead now. Oh, God, I'm so abashed by that. That's the way I am with names.

AL: That's okay.

CM: He ran a typewriter and stationery store on the main street in Presque Isle; ended up on the main street. He ended up the last few years there in that old Sears place there. But, oh, and I just loved that guy and I missed him so when he died; I mean, it was just awful. And he got in real trouble because he supported a Republican. When George Mitchell ran for governor, he supported Longley and he was an outcast; considered to be an outcast. And I met him in relation; he was a strong Dickey Lincoln supporter, didn't want to like him (*unintelligible phrase*) and as I say, he became I would say my best friend in Aroostook county. And I just, and he was such a constructive guy. And we had, I had dinner with him every time we went down there which was at least, it averaged four times a month, I mean, you know? And I've been at his house and in his shop and we used his facilities, you know, and used his phones and, oh, he was just a marvelous person. But he's probably, you know, not, he's not, of course not as well known as Floyd was. And then Floyd's wife died, Jean was very active politically too; was on the city council there. And as I say it was their daughter that I hired and she was. . . . and, who

were the other figures? Yeah, I want to talk about King Harvey a little later; he was the political guru at, on the Fort Fairfield review. I can see it doesn't ring a bell with you.

AL: No, that name doesn't.

CM: It's a very important person. Maybe I could go back to my script here and then; I mean I don't want to, I mean you're asking great questions (*unintelligible word*).

...

AL: You go right ahead.**CM:** I'd like to go back to the scene in 1975 when Mitchell, when Muskie decided to. . . . See I was hired in January; we opened an office in January 1975 up at Bangor in the federal building, and the one in Portland. And the senator had to convince Maine people that he'd given up his national ambitions and he was interested in the people of Maine; that he was coming back and he would probably run for reelection again in 1976. The groundwork for this attitude that Muskie had lost interest in Maine was no accident. Nixon's CREEP organization, the Committee to Reelect the President, had an organized campaign in Maine with many, many participants, ruling participants, who beginning in I think 1971, '70, '71 began writing about, see, every time Muskie would comment or be involved with something overseas, you know, or some national issue, you'd get a letter to the editor saying, you know, "Muskie's done this and that," you know, "Why doesn't he come back and pay attention to the people in Maine? I mean, we're interested in this and not in all that." And just letter after letter after letter, and unlike Mitchell Muskie wouldn't respond to these things. He let that public opinion be created. And so by 1975 it was a truism, I mean, even Democrats that liked Muskie, who had supported him in the past felt, "Well, you know, he's had his day and he's more interested in the big things now; he's not interested," you know. And they weren't mean comments, they were just stated as fact because this, Nixon's people had created this public opinion by using the people, these Republicans in Maine to create that opinion. And part of it was Muskie's fault because he didn't respond, you know, he didn't try to fight it.

And so we were not only elec- reaching out and holding constituent meetings in local offices and trying to get newspapers. . . . Half the time the newspapers wouldn't publish them, you know, Republican newspapers, and so, you know, we'd go there and nobody would show up because they didn't know we were there because they wouldn't publish the notice in the paper. But anyway, that was uneven; sometimes it would get in, sometimes it didn't.

And so here's Muskie, now this is his goal, all right? Well, I arranged for him possibly the greatest political event that possibly could have been arranged at that time. I lived right next door to Bud Leavitt who was the sports editor for the *Bangor Daily News* and the outdoors writer, and Muskie told me, no, Bud told me, he says, "Why doesn't Musk-," he loved Muskie by the way, and he says, "Why doesn't Muskie come up and do some fishing sometime." He says, "I'll take him around." So I broached it to Muskie and he said, "Oh, I'd love to go ice-fishing." I said, "Okay." So I went home and talked to Bud and he says, "Well it just so happens we've got an ice-fishing derby coming up on the-," not Graham Lake, a lake in Ellsworth, I'll think of it in a minute, on Sunday such and such a day what was about three weeks hence, you know. So jeez, I got word to Muskie; I said "God, that. . . ice-fishing derby, Bud Leavitt has agreed." And it was cold and I don't like the cold, I mean, you know, and so I

said, "I think that this would be nice if Bud and him went together and I stayed out of it," see.

So I arranged this so that Bud, anyway, so that Bud would pick him up at the hotel early in the morning, four-thirty or whatever it was on a Su-, bitterly, bitterly cold Sunday morning and drove him to the lake, and where there's hundreds of people there watching this fishing, ice-fishing tournament. And lo and behold, you wouldn't believe it and this was legitimate, Senator Mitchell, Senator Muskie caught the prize-winning fish, the biggest fish. And the next day on the front page of *The Bangor News* is this huge photograph of Muskie in this mackinaw jacket with a cap on; I think he had a cigar in his mouth, and, with the fish. Now, I may not have that picture perfectly correct because there were two pretty good events and two pretty good pictures, and I may be blending them. But, and Muskie, throughout the rest of his career would say, you know, "I fought for Dickey Lincoln and I prevented them from closing Loring," he says, "but the thing that people talk about is that fish." And so if you really wanted an event, you know, that would help, that would kick it off on the right thing, it was that. And it was simply because I lived next door to Bud Leavitt and we became good friends and he liked Muskie, you know what I mean?

There's no substitute for luck. The other thing I should mention to you because this is very, very important, and I suppose others must have commented on it, but that is the political scene in 1975 when all this happened. You have to realize that all the newspapers, daily newspapers in the state were heavily Republican and that *The Bangor News* was the most partisan of them all. And they hated Muskie with a passion. And John Day was the political columnist, and he followed the party line. And what everyone knew, quote and unquote, was that Representative Cohen who had been elected to his first term in 1972 and reelected in 1974 with a massive Democratic, independent, everybody's support, was going to be the candidate in '76. And he'd beat Muskie in '76; Ed Muskie had had his day, and he was the rising star and so on and so forth.

And so John Day was hired by *The Bangor Daily News* in my opinion to be a flak for Cohen and certainly he was. And the reason I say that is not only some knowledge I have about things but also my own, what I conjecture putting two and two together; talking with Margaret Chase Smith and others. Margaret Chase Smith, all the time she was in the Senate, *The Bangor News* hated her. And she had no use for them either because, if you stop and think of it, her best friend in the press world was a woman, a reporter, named May Craig who worked for the Portland papers. So whenever Margaret Chase Smith had anything to say, you know, she'd give it May Craig and the Portland paper would get the scoop on it and print it; get any, there was never much inside but if there was any it would go to May Craig. And I think that *The Bangor News* came to the conscious decision they were never going to let this happen again; that they were going to have at least one senator, since they were the Republican stalwart, even more than the Portland papers, that this was unfair and so on. . . .

And so I think they settled on Cohen very early as their man and they hired John Day to be his (*unintelligible word*). Well we got article after article after article in his weekly column, you know, calling attention, "Cohen this," and "Cohen that," and how Muskie's luster is off and so on and how Cohen's the rising young star, see. Well, I had been a Cohen watcher very closely since, since before he ran the first time; in fact I was kind of always a gadfly to him. I had a high

position in Elmer Violette's congressional campaign; Elmer ran against Cohen that first time and Cohen beat him. And so I, I don't know if Cohen ever thought me important enough to even think about it but anyway I was real, people perceived me as his nemesis and I could see myself that way. And I thought I knew Cohen pretty well by then. I had met him a few times. He was at the University; he taught law at the university while I was there and, on a part-time basis he did and had coffee with him a couple of times. He represented a friend of mine under (*name*) and testified, and you know, just peripheral contact like that. But I attended about every political event that he had because, because I was involved, you know?

And, let me see now; I've got to make sure I'm not losing my point here. Oh yeah, so I was convinced in my own mind that Cohen wouldn't do it. And I felt that when the crunch came to shove and he was in danger, I thought Muskie could come back; Ed had the potentially come back, and that Cohen would realize that well there was, it wasn't a sure thing. I mean, you know, he could lose his congressional seat and be out in the cold and everything. And that Muskie was old and, you know, and Hathaway was; at his time maybe he could do it down the road a piece. And at the same time I was watching a couple of other political figures, one of whom was Bob Monks.

So I went out on a limb in March; first week in March I think it was of 1975, and wrote a memo to. . . . In fact I wrote a long note, it must have been a little bit later, it was in March, wrote a lengthy memo to Senator Muskie on. . . . It started out saying that, "Bob Monks," (who was the energy commissioner for the state) "is using a half-assed idea about a new energy source called methanol, and that he's going to milk this for everything it's worth because he's going to be your opponent in 1976" and I says, "It's very important to me." So I went into this analysis; I, when they announced that the Monk's report that, (he was ballyhooed in the press, he'd put out all these press releases, you know, he was using it), was going to be available to the public let's say at eight-thirty A.M. at the State House in Augusta on Tuesday, oh, let's say March 4th or March 10th or something. I was there at, before the doors opened even and I got the first copy and I raced back to Bangor and I examined this thing and I thought it was the most ridiculous thing I'd ever seen in my life. And I wrote a paper on it anyway. And sure enough, I mean, in December Cohen went up to the mountain top up in the ski lodge area there, Sugarloaf, to their chalet, and finally told John Day and told him that he wasn't going to run.

That was probably around the 20th of December of 1975; somewhere around there. And of course if you, in, when I went out on a limb on that, of course I had to; it wasn't just sheer speculation, I felt that. . . . But I felt it was up to me to make that come true by showing Cohen that he was at risk. And I had had a, met a couple of friends, people who became friends who were bigwigs in the Republican party; former bigwigs. And one of them, his name was George Economy. George Economy had been the AA; the lea-, number one staff person for Fred Payne when Fred Payne was governor. Well Muskie defeated Fred Payne eventually, what was it, in the Senate race, wasn't it? Wasn't it the Senate race? See I wasn't active in those days so I, my memory of the fifties isn't, isn't that good. But he did, I think Fred Payne ran for governor, ran for the senate after he was governor, and then Muskie beat him.

And George Economy developed a lot of respect for Muskie, the way he conducted himself in that campaign. Instead of being, you know, and, he was not very fond of Cohen. And so, and I knew that, and George had tremendous connections throughout the second district. Then I met

another guy who I won't name, who had similar credentials in the Republican party. And, so I went and called on them to ask them what we could do, you know, to create a Republican stir for Muskie. And in fact there'd always been a strong Republicans for Muskie element in Maine anyway so there was a matrix here to draw on. And so I won't go into all the details, but one of the events we arranged was in August. One of the things that George Economy did, (he not only owned the IGA store on Main Street, well he ended up actually out on Union Street,) but he and his wife opened a restaurant right next door to it. And he says, and we put together a Republican invitation list and we got back, the feedback from; wow, it was just amazing. And so we had twenty-two Republicans I think it was who agreed; George agreed to close the restaurant for that day and just turn it over and he'd give us a free lobster meal or whatever it was, so they could chat with Muskie and, you know, and so on and so forth. And of course we kept this secret because we didn't want Cohen to know who was there. But the day after the event, you know, I mean, I began circulating the information about this fantastic event, that we had these Republicans you know. And so that was one thing that helped it.

A second thing that helped it was that, I was telling you about King Harvey, the editor of the *Fort Fairfield Review*. Well King Harvey is a life-long Republican and just lived and died politics. And he was the type of guy that the editors of the Portland paper and the Bangor paper and so on, these big papers would read King Harvey because he was political, you know, commentaries. And, [he was a] widely respected man. And King, so King Harvey had supported Muskie when he ran for governor in 1954 against Burton Cross because Burton Cross had been involved in some shady financial dealings. And one thing about King Harvey, if there was any smack, anyone using politics to enrich themselves, he was a, he would come down and four square against you. So he supported Muskie during that race and I found that out and, I found it out from (*unintelligible word*) because when I would go to. . . . You asked me what I did when I went to Aroostook. One of the things I did was I used to go down and drop in on the editors of newspapers and just, you know, fill them, (I didn't necessarily expect press,) but just to fill them in on what we were doing and countering things, and they'd have questions, you know, things like that. So I became pretty good friends with King Harvey as a matter of fact, and so I went to see him. And on one of the occasions, let's say it was April or May, whatever it was, and told him that, you know, showed him my Monks memo and told him I had to make this come true. And he says, "Clyde," he said, "if Bill Cohen," and he loved Bill Cohen, and he, "if Bill Cohen decides he's going to challenge Muskie," he says, "I'm going to tell Bill Cohen that I'm going to support Muskie." I said, "Would you really do that? This is very important to me you tell him that." And he said he would and I presume he did because he was a man of his word.

So we had all these little things going anyway, you know, I mean, to try and convince Cohen that it was a bad move. But I think that's one of the most valuable set of activities that. . . . I'm not saying that I was single-handedly responsible or anything like that, but I do know in my own mind that I played an important role in bringing that about. So that meant that in 1976 Muskie had clear sailing against a weak opponent, and a very rich opponent. But, you know, I mean, Cohen would have been much more formidable than Monks and it would have been a very tight race.

AL: I'm going to have to stop you right there.

End of Side Two, Tape One
Side One, Tape Two

AL: two of the interview with Clyde MacDonald on May 12th, 1999 at the Muskie Archives at Bates College.

CM: There's one more little detail that I should have mentioned when I was talking about that fantastic luncheon we had at the Economy Restaurant. One of the Republicans that showed up was a person that when Muskie was governor he occupied an important position with the Republicans and he gave Muskie the hardest time. And when we, I can remember when we came out of there Muskie says, "I can't believe that that guy, that such and such was there." He says, "He gave me the hardest time than anybody in the whole legislature." He says, "I thought he hated me." He says, "And now he's going to support me and against Cohen." You know, he was just high as a kite you know.

Okay. So here we are, again, still in 1975. One of the events that we always got invited to was an event that I always thought was perfectly horrible and I wished that I could have avoided them. But, the people in Aroostook and King Harvey in particular thought the Maine Potato Blossom Festival was one of the greatest shows on earth. And boy if you were a politician and didn't show up at that, King Harvey would write you off in a minute, you know, as would a lot of other people. So we always had to go to it, and it was always on the hottest day of the year. And they had those awful Miss Potato Blossom pageants (*unintelligible word*) in the gym there. And the humidity would be a hundred degrees, you know, and you could feel the sweat rolling down your arms after about ten minutes, and close. And the thing would go on and on and on, and oh, and I went, and Muskie would go every year and then later Mitchell would go every year. And of course I was sitting there with them every year. One year I did manage to get out of it; I don't know, I sat out in the car.

But anyway, the, so here's Cohen you know, still not, in his own mind thinking he might run against Muskie the following year and everybody building him up as the young rising star. Well they had a tremendous mens' clothing store on Main Street in Fort Fairfield, Ayube's (?). And I remember seeing that day when I was up, early that morning, that Ayube's in his window had this mannequin with this bright, bright canary yellow mens' suit. Well that night, when Cohen and Muskie and all those people that were going to make their speeches and things, who walks in but Cohen in this bright, bright yellow canary suit that he obviously had bought at Ayube's that day to show support of their local economy in my jaundiced view. And anyway, he, Cohen went up on the stage and he gave his cutesy-wutesy talk, you know, and whatever, and got a big round of applause. And he had sneakers on I think, and, because he uses this walk through the valley type of thing. And instead of coming down the stairs, (the stage was oh probably as high as from here to that bar), he ran over and jumped off and landed on the gym floor and walked back to his seat.

Well, a few minutes later came Muskie's turn to get up to speak. So he went up, and he went up the stairs and then up on the stage and he gave his address; got a tremendous round of ovation. And he started to head for the stairs, took about two steps, stopped, and then ran over and jumped off the stage. And I, and his feet were huge, you know. And you could hear; the whole

building shook, “Boom,” and here’s this guy, you know, in his late sixties and he’s not going to take any of that from Cohen, you know. So he goes over and he jumps off that stage and as I say the whole building shook, and if that didn’t show the feistiness of Muskie.

One of the other fun events we had that afternoon--- Cohen really took a beating that day --- that afternoon, they have this, they stage this, I guess they have it every year, a potato-picking contest. And they, (*unintelligible phrase*), it’s right on the tarmac right up in the middle; you know, the sun beating down and so on, [and] there isn’t a green leaf in sight. I mean it’s just potatoes. And so Cohen and Muskie were to have this, to see who could pick potatoes the, the most potatoes in a short period of time, [and] put them in the basket. Well Chip Bull, an ardent Democrat, was the chairman of the event and Chip and I were good friends. And Chip says, you know, I said, “Jeez, I hope Cohen doesn’t make,” you know. He says, “It doesn’t matter what Cohen does.” He says, “Muskie’s the winner.” So anyway, the time came and they’re out there scrambling and in my judgment Cohen had a few more. Muskie did surprisingly well, but Cohen had a few more than Muskie did. And, God, Chip Bull raises Muskie’s arm as the winner and gives him this trophy. I still have this trophy in my house, at home. I took it back to the office and, because all throughout 1975 I wanted people to come in and say, “Oh, what’s that trophy for?” And I could say, “Well, that was,” because you know everybody thought that Muskie was old and that Cohen was such an athletic, vibrant young man. . . . “But you know Muskie actually beat Cohen in a potato, in a potato contest.” And I says, “This is the trophy.” And I took it home with me after; Muskie never did get it. I still have it. Anyway I wanted to tell you those two stories about that. Okay, I don’t know if that’s a logical place to end or if you want to go on a little bit further or. . . .?

AL: Sure, let’s go on maybe just ten minutes? Sure.

CM: Yeah, I’m all the way down my first page, look at right there. Muskie had always had a good following in Aroostook county of both Republicans and Democrats; of course Democrats primarily. But, and I think one of the, (I was trying to account for it), one of the things that I found out about Muskie was that during World War II, he was the Office of Price Administration, the OPA, agent for the Roosevelt administration, (Roosevelt, maybe Roosevelt and Truman, no, Roosevelt,) who was responsible for establishing I guess price controls on goods, including potatoes. And I guess Muskie, you know, created an image of someone being so fair, you know, and having his intellectual powers that he had and his decency and everything came across. And I think that’s one of the things that helped him in Aroostook.

You know, if you try to account for these things, one of the things that I do know, (I mean, I think this is obvious but people don’t like to mention it,) is the Catholic connection. The Democratic Party in Maine. . . . I mean every once in a while you’d find these people like the Freemans in Presque Isle, the Naults and Julian and Edward Davis; these are dear, dear friends of Muskie, well even in the, early, early Muskie supporters. And when I find someone that was an early, early Muskie supporter back when he ran for governor out in these isolated areas where you had a lot of Republicans, usually they were Catholic. And I’m not saying, you know, because a person’s Catholic they’re going to vote for such a person, but it gives you a bias you know. And if you, if the, like people like Muskie, you get to know him; you know, he grows on you. In fact Muskie always maintained that he never would not ever, he never would have been elected governor in 1954 had it not been for this new medium called TV. He said, “For the first

time in history,” he said, “people got a chance to look at me directly rather than what the newspapers are saying about me.” And he says, “It’s probably the first time they ever had a Catholic Democrat in their living room, too,” you know. And he says, “They found that I didn’t wear horns,” you know, and this kind of thing.

Now, there weren’t a lot of TV sets in 1954, but still the people that had them, you know, were, (I can remember when I got a set we’d invite other people over), and the people that had them, you know, there was enough there to create a public opinion, you know, about, “Well, this Muskie,” you know. And so he attributed that as one key element in his political success because, you know, he thought he was just a sacrificial lamb; he wasn’t going to get elected, and no Democrat could get elected in Maine at the time.

I would like to comment on something that I discovered because we were in such conflict with *The Bangor News* which was the primary source. . . . *The Bangor News* today is far different; I mean, they’re very fair politically and they have an intelligent. Anyway, I have good, a favorable attitude toward the newspaper today which I did not used to have. And as I say, they were promoting Cohen; they always were trying to run down Muskie even before the Cohen thing came along, and were just very unfair to Democrats period and considered themselves, I think, part of the Republican machine.

But, and so when items appear in a newspaper, you know reporters and columnists get hired, you know, and they know what management expects. And reporters who aren’t wise enough to know what management expects may still, when they submit their story and the managing editor and others look at it and see what it has to say, you know, they can make recommen-. . . . They can see that it doesn’t get printed if it’s favorable, or they can advise you to take out this or that, you know what I mean? TV reporters don’t have that luxury. They, they’re interviewing let’s say at two o’clock in the afternoon for a broadcast that’s going to go on at five-thirty, six o’clock. And so when they bring their footage back they don’t have time to, the management doesn’t have time to interfere with these things. I mean, I can remember channel 5, George Gonwas a manager there and he was as strong a Republican as you’ll ever find. He and I became very good friends. He loves, George loves politics; he’s retired now, living in Orono. But they didn’t have time to do these things, see, so you could always get a fair hearing on TV and this helped Democrats enormously. And I think [it] contributed to this notion Republicans have about the media bias, because for the first time in history, at least in Maine, we were getting a fair shake which to them makes it look like, you know, a bias. And so I did want to mention that. I think the difference in the mediums here had a lot to do with our political success from that angle and I never heard anyone else mention that so I wanted to mention it to you anyway.

AL: Well thank you, Clyde. Maybe we should stop here and I’ll. . . .

CM: All right, let me just conclude by mentioning, no, I already mentioned that people like the Freemans and the Violettes and the Davises and the Naults in Aroostook and Washington counties were among his best friends. He liked to stay at their homes when he went up there rather than a motel. And that is the place where we’ll end. We got through the whole first page.

AL: Great. I look forward to talking to you again soon. Thank you.

End of Interview